Exploring British naval policy during the first two governments of Harold Wilson (1964-70), this book analyses how the Navy Department of the Ministry of Defence and the Navy's professional leadership dealt with six years of defence reviews, retrenchment and strategic re-orientation. This period witnessed a dramatic blow to the service's self image and self confidence as a result of the cancellation of the large CVA-01 aircraft carrier, and a gradual process of realignment, reorientation and adaptation to the changed political environment, resulting in a recovery of self-confidence, a new strategy and the approval in principle of a class of small aircraft carriers.

Taking advantage of the recently released official records, the study highlights for the first time just how in practice Mountbatten managed to dominate the Chiefs of Staff machinery, and how his power was undermined and diminished. It also demonstrates that, contrary to widespread historical opinion, Denis Healey was not necessarily set against carrier air power from his arrival in office and was willing to consider the procurement of a medium carrier for the navy. Furthermore, the work highlights the importance of the Mediterranean in the rehabilitation and renewal of self-confidence by the navy in the late 1960s.

Although focusing primarily on policy and strategic matters, the book incorporates wider historical consideration, reviewing other factors that influenced policy-making such as foreign policy, financial resources, materiel, manpower and recruitment, in addition to the administrative machinery and the cultural environment of the time. In so doing, Dr Hampshire offers a vivid insight into the interactions of government and military at a critical juncture in the changing nature of Britain's global role.

Contents
Preface; Introduction; The Royal Navy in 1964; Emerging from Mountbatten's shadow; The Navy alone; The cancellation of CVA-01; The Navy and the defence expenditure studies; The Mediterranean strategy; Building a new fleet; Conclusion; Bibliography; Index.

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